



**Annual review**  
**2016-17**

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# Centre for Ageing Better

## About us

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The Centre for Ageing Better was set up in 2015 and is funded by an endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. We are part of the network of What Works organisations that promote the better use of evidence.

We bring about change for people in later life today and for future generations. Practical solutions, research about what works best and people's own insight are all sources that we draw on to help make this change. We share this information and support others to act on it. We also try out new approaches to improving later lives.



# Longer life – an opportunity for everyone?

Population projections show that in 2024, more than one in four of us will be over 60. In the UK today there are now about as many people aged 60 and over as there are aged 18 and below. But, rather than celebrating the gift and opportunity of longer life, our ageing society is seen as a drain on resources, and ageism is one of the last acceptable forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Many people do enjoy a good later life, but others risk ill-health, poverty and loneliness. And at the same time, many people in mid-life are struggling to get by and aren't in a position to think about planning for the future.

Our fundamental purpose is to drive the changes needed so that more people will benefit from their longer lives. This short review gives an overview of some of the work we've done in the last year.

There are serious and systemic issues that need to be tackled now. These include:



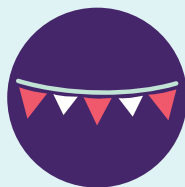
**Employment:**  
around 1 million people between 50 and the State Pension age want to be in work, but for a range of reasons are not



**Housing:**  
over 90% of older people live in mainstream housing, but just 7% of homes meet basic accessibility criteria



**Health:**  
around a third of over 65s in England suffer a fall every year, many of which are preventable



**Volunteering:**  
those in the richest 20% are more than three times more likely to engage in formal volunteering than those in the poorest 20%



**Finances:**  
around 12 million people below State Pension age are not saving enough to maintain their living standards into retirement

This review demonstrates the approach we are taking to create evidence-based change. In 2016-17 we commissioned two large systematic reviews – on home adaptations, and inequalities for people in later life. We commissioned and completed a co-design project in Greater Manchester, talking to local residents, employers and job centre managers on how to get people over 50 back into work. We influenced central government policy on work and health, and housing. We launched programmes on community contributions and physical activity. More detail of other activities are outlined in this review.

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## In the UK today there are now about as many people aged 60 and over as there are aged 18 and below

This review shows how we are working in partnership with others and demonstrates our commitment to focus on the issues that are important for people in later life. We are grateful to the Big Lottery Fund for their vision and support in creating and funding Ageing Better. We are working on joint programmes in diverse areas including work, health, volunteering, housing, digital access and retirement. Our institutional partners include Business in the Community, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Housing LIN, the International Longevity Centre, the Good Things Foundation, the Design Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

We have listened to the expertise and experience of hundreds of other national and local organisations working on the issues we focus on. We have brought them together to share knowledge and debate solutions.

Many people across England gave their time (and allowed themselves to be photographed and filmed!) to talk about their experience of doing more strength and balance activity, of being unable to get into work that was suitable for them and what could be done to solve this, and of how contributing to their community through volunteering benefited them as well as those they helped. Our staff visited care homes, lunch clubs, music groups, Death Cafés, Men's Sheds and craft sessions to talk with and listen to people's everyday experience of later life. All these contributions and conversations continue to shape our work.

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## Our purpose is to drive the changes needed so more people benefit from longer lives

Looking to the future, we will continue to aim for the practical changes and outcomes we've identified in each of our areas, such as 1 million more people over 50 in work by 2022, more homes adapted and more people doing strength and balance exercise to help prevent falls. More broadly, we will help to catalyse change across all sectors of society to focus on the opportunity of longer later lives.



We would like to thank all the individual people in later life who have contributed to our thinking and design of programmes so far, as well as all our partners and organisations who have worked with us and given us their advice. We look forward to continuing to work with you, and new friends and partners. Together we are helping create change to truly make our society ready for ageing.

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## Being in fulfilling work

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**Around 1 million people between 50 and the State Pension age want to be in work, but for a range of reasons are not. Enabling more older workers to remain in fulfilling work is not only important for people themselves – contributing to financial security and often to physical and mental health and good social connections – but is critical to economic growth and to meeting the country's future labour market needs.**

Around 70% of people aged 50-64 are in work, compared to 83% of people aged 25-49. Less than half of people are still in work the year before they reach State Pension age. If the employment rate of those aged 50-64 matched the employment rate of people in their 30s and 40s, it is estimated that GDP could be up to £88 billion higher per year.

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**70% of people aged 50-64 are in work, compared to 83% of 25-49 year olds**



## Activities in 2016-17:

- Published a review of the evidence on what makes work fulfilling for older workers, which found that people over 50 want the same as younger people from work – fulfilling roles, flexibility, opportunities to learn and progress – but are less likely to experience this
- Worked as part of Business in the Community's Age at Work campaign to promote the 'Retain, Retrain, Recruit' report, and to advocate for age-friendly workplaces and a goal of 1 million more people over 50 in work by 2022
- Provided significant input into the Government's Fuller Working Lives Strategy, with an emphasis on policies that enable people to stay in fulfilling work, including recommendations on flexible working, lifelong learning and carers' rights
- Launched our first innovation project with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority – to co-design solutions to worklessness with people over 50 who want to get back into the job market, in five GM boroughs
- Convened experts to respond to the Work and Health Green Paper, who emphasised that the disability employment gap cannot be tackled without recognising and addressing the distinctive needs and circumstances of older people with health conditions
- Made two submissions to the Independent Review of the State Pension age, encouraging the review team to consider wider issues than affordability – including the need to reshape the labour market to allow more people to work for longer and save more; and we provided a launch platform for the review findings

## Future activities include:

- Developing practical evidence-based guidance on three key age-friendly workplace practices, working with Business in the Community, on: preventing age bias in recruitment, maximising the benefits of mixed-age teams, and effectively managing flexible working
- Developing and implementing prototypes and solutions based on our initial co-design work in Greater Manchester that help reduce barriers for people over 50 to return to the labour market
- Continuing to use evidence to influence government policy on employment of older workers



Going back to work was an opportunity for me because my employer was very flexible.

Qurab, 54



## Living in a suitable home and neighbourhood

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**We want more people to live in homes and neighbourhoods that support a good later life. We know that most people want to stay in their own homes but most are not well adapted – or even fit to live in.**

Home adaptations, from simple items such as grab rails, to bathrooms that are easy to use for people with a disability, have been shown to improve the quality of life for 90% of recipients. Relatively low cost modifications can lead to a 26% reduction in falls that need medical treatment.

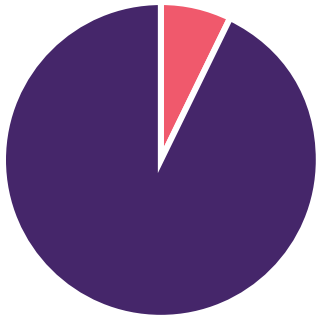


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**Home adaptations have been shown to improve the quality of life of 90% of recipients**



## Over 90% of older people live in mainstream housing



Yet there is a significant shortage of accessible homes in the UK – the latest English housing survey shows that only **7%** of homes meet basic accessibility features\*

 7% of homes meet basic accessibility criteria

\*Source: Department for Communities and Local Government (2016), 'English housing survey 2014 to 2015: adaptations and accessibility of homes report'

### Activities in 2016-17:

- Commissioned a major systematic review on the role of home adaptations in improving later life that will be published later this year, and have worked throughout the year to influence system leaders and policy makers about the importance of adapting existing housing stock
- Influenced national strategy on housing, including a submission reflected in the Housing White Paper, emphasising that local areas must consider the needs of the ageing population in their housing planning and supply
- Worked with Anchor and Hanover Housing to bring together housing, health and care professionals to share learning, good practice and new ideas for integration of housing and health and care services

### Future activities include:

- Publishing and using the findings from the evidence review on the role of home adaptations in improving later life, alongside the findings of primary research with practitioners and people with lived experience, to influence those who provide and fund adaptations
- Gathering and sharing examples of innovative ways of delivering the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Working with suppliers of adaptations to improve their offer to those who can self-fund
- Influencing the broader housing agenda including new build, specialist housing, planning regulation and local spatial frameworks

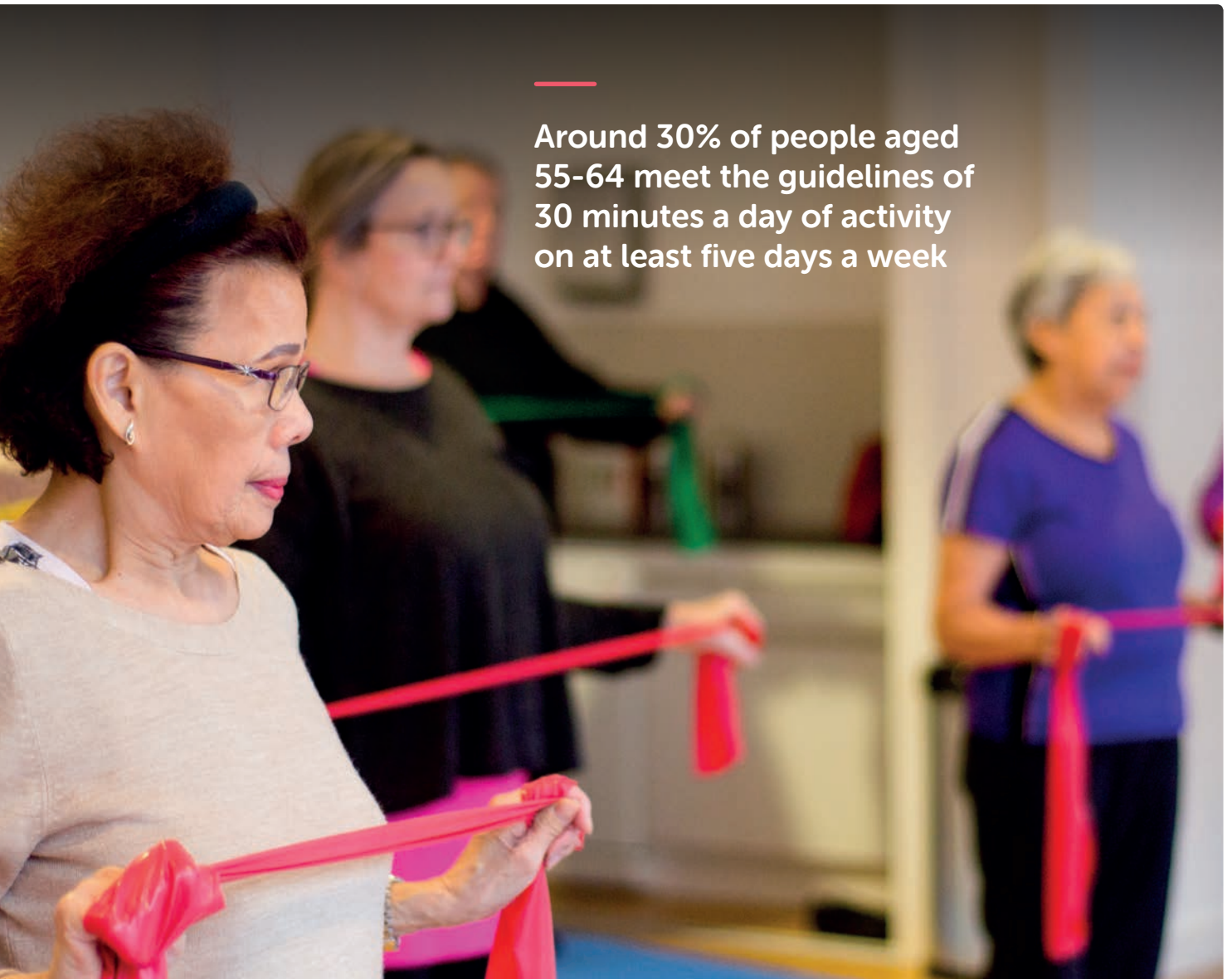


## Keeping physically active

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**Being more active has many benefits – it improves physical and mental health, enables people to stay in work and to stay connected to their family, friends and communities. But only around 30% of people aged 55-64 meet the guidelines of 30 minutes a day of activity on at least five days a week, and this figure drops off sharply with less than 10% of those over 75 meeting the target.**

As well as this, there are low levels of strength and balance activity – the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends two sessions of this kind of movement a week. With people over 40 losing 8% of muscle mass per decade, and almost one third of older adults suffering a fall every year, strength and balance activity is crucial for good health in later life.



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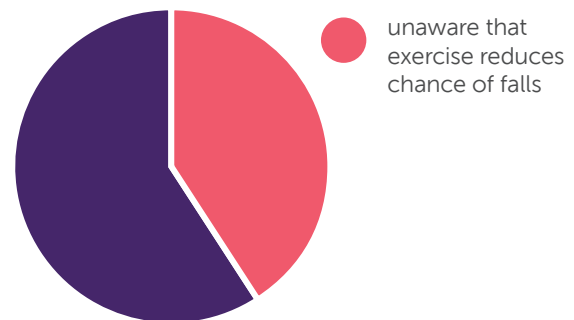
## Activities in 2016-17:

- Carried out work to scope the benefit we could add in this area and consulted with a wide range of community, voluntary and statutory organisations, as well as meeting many individuals and hearing their stories about the benefits of strength and balance activity
- Working with Public Health England (PHE) and many other bodies and individuals, launched our programme on physical activity, with a focus on improving strength and balance to prevent falls and help people live independent and active lives
- Commissioned a survey on knowledge of the need to do strength and balance activity, and published this with the PHE led falls prevention partnership group's consensus statement. The survey showed that 41% of people over 70 don't realise the importance of strength and balance activity to help prevent falls, and was publicised in more than 300 media outlets
- Sent practical information on strength and balance activity to 32,000 occupational therapists, working with the Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- Jointly with PHE, commissioned the Chief Medical Officer's Expert Group to review clinical and public advice on strength and balance activity and exercise

## Future activities include:

- Helping implement the Falls Consensus Statement with PHE and partner bodies
- Publishing and using the CMO's Expert Group review of strength and balance to inform the CMO's revised guidance in 2019 to clinicians and the public
- Helping local areas that are taking a whole system approach to falls prevention, mobility and independence to learn and share their experience
- Promoting information about strength and balance activity to people who are likely to do more themselves
- Working with Sport England to help ensure the success of their Active Ageing programme

## 41% of over 70s don't realise strength and balance exercises can help reduce the risk of falls\*



Carrying out strength and balance exercises or activities two or more times a week greatly reduce people's chances of suffering a fall

\*Source: Ipsos MORI Strength and Balance Survey. 2017



## Contributing to communities

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**Voluntary activities, formal civic roles and small acts of neighbourliness can all contribute significantly to personal wellbeing and are linked to having stronger social connections. We know that many people want to contribute but don't know the best way to do it, or have the right opportunities to do so.**

People in excellent health are five times more likely to contribute than those in poor health. Amongst people aged 50 and over, those in the richest 20% are more than three times more likely to engage in formal volunteering than those in the poorest 20%.



It makes you feel inclusive and it makes you feel confident that you can be a part of the community.

Mohan, 62

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### Activities in 2016-17:

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- Launched our work with a new review of the evidence on the benefits of voluntary activity in later life. The review found that people aged 50 and over with fewer social connections, lower levels of income and education, and poorer health may have the most to gain from helping others. However, the people who are most likely to volunteer are those who are already relatively wealthy, in good physical and mental health, and with high levels of wellbeing and social connections. People who could benefit most from developing new friends and increasing their sense of purpose and satisfaction in later life are losing out, because they are less likely to get involved

### Future activities include:

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- Engaging with leading voluntary organisations to identify the barriers that can prevent people in later life from taking part in volunteering
- Conducting insight work in disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the country to explore how people in later life contribute to and participate in their communities, and identify practical steps that can be taken to support them
- Convening older volunteers, voluntary organisations, innovators and other stakeholders to identify key barriers, opportunities and promising approaches to grow voluntary action in later life



## Managing major life changes

We want more people to successfully manage the major changes that occur in later life such as retirement, becoming a carer, bereavement, or needing care. These changes can have a significant effect on the quality of life.

With around 700,000 people turning 65 each year, we are focusing on helping people manage the transition from paid work into retirement positively.

A **positive outlook** can help people lead longer and healthier lives



Those with a more positive attitude towards ageing have been shown to live on average **4.9 years longer** than those without\*

\*Source: Lakra, D. C., Ng, R., & Levy, B. R. (2012), 'Increased longevity from viewing retirement positively'. Ageing and Society, 32(08)

### Activities in 2016-17:

- Partnered with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) to support their Transitions in Later Life programme, with a particular focus on retirement. Together, we have evaluated seven retirement transition projects and supported a learning community that brings together the lead practitioners. We evaluated the Envisage project, which provided retirement courses for those on a low income
- Carried out scoping of a new programme on planning and preparing for later life. This involved looking at the existing evidence base and opportunities in relation to the issues, barriers and enablers to people planning and preparing for later life

### Future activities include:

- Publishing the evaluation of the first phase of CGF retirement transitions projects and commissioning the evaluation of the next phase of projects
- Commissioning evidence which provides insight into experiences of the retirement transition, understanding employer attitudes and developing an influencing plan
- Commissioning an evidence review on the barriers to planning and preparing for later life
- Identifying further opportunities to take action to help people in planning and preparing for later life

# Cross-cutting work

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## Activities in 2016-17:

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- Commissioned a major study on inequalities and ageing, working with Newcastle University and ILC-UK. The review will be published in autumn 2017
- Supported the further development of the UK Network of Age-Friendly Communities
- With the Design Council, supported Transform Ageing, a new, cross-sector partnership bringing together people in later life, social entrepreneurs and health and social care leaders. The partnership's brief is to define, develop and deliver new, people-centred solutions that better support the needs and aspirations of our ageing communities
- Taken part in the Resolution Foundation's Intergenerational Commission, and worked with them to produce an analysis of the experience and characteristics of low to middle income households age 50 to State Pension age
- Launched an insight study on digital use by people in later life with the Good Things Foundation. It explores the motivations and barriers facing people in later life who are not making use of the internet, and will develop practical recommendations for new approaches to supporting them

## Future activities include:

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- Using the review of the research evidence on the scale, nature and determinants of inequalities in later life to both influence others and inform our work
- Developing our work on the local approach to ageing, including agreeing additional locality partnerships
- Continuing to contribute to the Resolution Foundation Intergenerational Commission in order to understand how future generations of people will experience later life and shape policies to support this
- Conducting further work to understand the potential for more appropriate digital solutions for people in later life
- Learning from other countries about successful strategies and policies to promote and improve healthy ageing
- Continuing to seek opportunities to communicate the benefits of longer life and the opportunities as well as the challenges of an ageing population, including contributing to a WHO-led global campaign to combat ageism

# What can you do to help?

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Across these areas, practitioners and people who make decisions tell us that not enough is being done to respond to the ageing population. There's a lot you can do with us to change this:



## DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Share and apply insight and evidence of what people in later life want and what works in practice

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## MAKE A COMMITMENT

Prioritise ageing in your organisation – grasp the opportunities as well as tackle the challenges of demographic change

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## TAKE ACTION

Create change by trying out new approaches in partnership with us

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We need to act now to improve later lives today and for future generations.  
**Join us in making that change.**

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The Centre for Ageing Better received £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund in January 2015 in the form of an endowment to enable it to identify what works in the ageing sector by bridging the gap between research, evidence and practice.